

Date

To:

From:

Re: Patrol Emphasis on Drivers Who Don't Buckle Up & Don't Buckle Up Kids

Idahoans are encouraged to "*Click It, Don't Risk It!*" as part of a campaign to save lives by increasing seat belt and child safety seat use. Law enforcement agencies throughout Idaho will step up enforcement patrols Feb. 7-19. Failure to be properly restrained violates Idaho law requiring all occupants to be buckled up and puts all vehicle occupants at risk of death or injury in the event of a crash.

In addition to an emphasis on seat belt violations, officers will be on the lookout for children who are not properly restrained.

"We want you and your family to make it home safely at the end of the day. Your chances of doing just that increase when you're wearing a seat belt, and if your child is in an appropriate safety seat," says Officer _____, (agency). "The extra patrols we conduct during the *Click It, Don't Risk It!* campaign remind people how important it is to buckle up. We will ticket drivers who violate these traffic safety laws."

Of the 239 motor vehicle occupants killed in Idaho in 2003, only 89 (37 percent) were properly restrained. The national seat belt usage rate is 80 percent while Idaho's seat belt usage rate is just 74 percent. Only 62 percent of pickup occupants buckle up in Idaho.

Every day, five Idahoans are either killed or seriously injured in traffic crashes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that half of all those killed would have lived if they had buckled up. An additional 75 lives could have been saved in 2003 alone.

"These people are mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters," says _____, from _____ (agency).

On average, people injured in traffic crashes pay just 15 cents of each dollar of their medical bills, according to NHTSA. The remaining 85 percent falls on society, not on the individuals involved. These medical costs are paid primarily through taxes and insurance premiums. Hospital costs are 55 percent higher for those not wearing safety restraints.

Half of Idaho's \$10 safety restraint fine goes into the state's Catastrophic Health Care account. The account is used to pay the medical bills of uninsured and underinsured people who don't qualify for any other state or federal aid in paying their bills.

(Use attached "Costs of 2003 Motor Vehicle Occupant Injuries in Idaho by County" to complete the following paragraph.) In _____ County in 2003, there were _____ motor vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes. _____ were not properly restrained. Of the _____ people seriously injured in crashes, _____ were not restrained. The comprehensive cost savings if all had been properly restrained is almost _____ million in 2003.

Idaho's seat belt law applies as follows:

- All occupants must be properly restrained.
- All adult violators, 18 and older, will receive a \$10 citation.
- Adult drivers with any unbelted occupants under 18 years of age will receive a \$10 citation.
- Drivers under 18 years old will be cited if anyone under 18 years old is not properly restrained.
The fine is \$42.50.

While still a secondary law requiring an officer to make the traffic stop for another violation of law, the officer may write the safety restraint citation without the primary citation.

The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) recommends booster seats for children age 4 to 8, unless they are at least 4 feet 9 inches tall. A booster seat elevates a child so a seat belt can fit correctly. Most seat belts are designed to protect an average-sized adult male. Young children using only seat belts are at risk of injuries to the abdomen and spine, and are four times more likely to suffer a serious head injury in a crash if they are not secured in a booster seat.

According to ITD, between 2001 and 2003 in Idaho, nine children (ages 4-8) died and 73 were seriously injured in passenger vehicle crashes. Thirty-five of the injured children were unrestrained. During the same period, among children ages 9-14, 14 died and 134 were seriously injured. Fifty-seven percent of those children were not wearing seat belts.

NHTSA offers four simple ways to increase safety for children riding in motor vehicles:

1. REAR-FACING INFANT SEATS - in the back seat from birth to at least 1 year old and less than 20 pounds.
2. FORWARD-FACING TODDLER SEATS - in the back seat from age 1 to about age 4, or 20 to 40 pounds.
3. BOOSTER SEATS - in the back seat from about age 4 to at least age 8, or taller than 4 feet 9 inches.
4. SAFETY BELTS - at age 8 or older, or taller than 4 feet 9 inches. All children 12 and younger, or less than 100 pounds, should ride in the back seat and never in front of an air bag.

ITD is funding an extensive, statewide paid media campaign including television, radio, and billboard advertising to inform the public of the increased patrols and importance of buckling up. The _____ (agency), receives funding from the Department to aide in their efforts to save lives by conducting safety restraint enforcement patrols. These funds, received from NHTSA, are dedicated to increasing safety restraint use in Idaho.

Idaho and Oregon law enforcement agencies as well are participating in this effort at this time.

Editor's note: An event to kick off the campaign will be held at _____ location, _____ address, _____ time.

See attached sheet for more cost statistics for Idaho.

What percent of the comprehensive costs from car crashes are borne by the general public?

Nearly 74 percent of the comprehensive costs are paid by the general public through insurance premiums, taxes, direct out-of-pocket payments for goods and services and increased charges for medical care. (Society at large picks up over 85 percent of medical costs.)

- The costs are broken down as follows according to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration studies:
 - ✓ Insurance companies pick up approximately 50 percent of the costs.
 - ✓ Government agencies (federal, state, and local) pay over 9 percent of the crash costs.
 - ✓ Almost 15 percent is spread to other entities such as employers.
 - ✓ Just 26 percent of crash costs are paid by those involved in the crashes themselves.

The costs are based on Federal Highway Administration estimates for collisions and are updated to represent 2003 dollars:

- Each fatality costs \$3,129,653
- Each serious injury costs \$216,66
- Each visible injury costs \$43,334
- Each possible injury costs \$22,871

The costs are comprehensive and encompass many different components including medical, pre-funeral, emergency service, vocational rehabilitation, market production, household production, insurance administration, workplace, legal/court, travel delay and property damage costs.

Reference: Idaho Traffic Collisions, 2003. Idaho Transportation Department, Office of Traffic and Highway Safety.